

TWIN LAKES STAKEHOLDER GROUP (TLSG)

FINAL REPORT – AUGUST 3, 2016

BACKGROUND: Two Requests for Change

As part of the update to the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) that occurs every five years, the City of Boulder and Boulder County invite property owners and the community to submit requests for change to the land use designations of specific parcels. In October 2015, there were competing submissions for change to the land use designations for three parcels totaling approximately 20-acres in Gunbarrel in an area south of Twin Lakes. One of these parcels is owned by the Boulder County Housing Authority (BCHA) and is currently designated as Low Density Residential (LR), which would permit between 2 to 6 dwelling units per acre to be developed. The other two parcels are owned by the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) and are currently designated Public (PUB), a designation that does not have a specific number of possible units attached to it. BCHA and BVSD submitted requests (consolidated as “request #35”) to have the land use designation of both these parcels changed to Mixed Density Residential (MXR), which would permit between 6 and 18 dwelling units per acre to be built. Members of an association of neighbors from the greater Boulder/Gunbarrel community, known as the Twin Lakes Action Group (TLAG), submitted a requests (consolidated as “request #36”) to have the land use designation for the two properties be changed to open space (OS) with natural ecosystems or environmental preservation designation.¹ Due to the similarity of the requests proposing an open space designation they were consolidated as “Request #36” for analysis purposes.

Four bodies must review and approve any change to a land use designation in the BVCP: the Boulder County Commissioners, the Boulder County Planning Commission, the Boulder City Council, and the City of Boulder Planning Board. During its discussion of these two competing requests to change the land use designation of the Twin Lakes properties in March 2016, the Boulder City Council and Boulder County Commission passed a joint motion establishing a stakeholder group to engage in a collaborative discussion regarding the Twin Lakes properties. The Twin Lakes Stakeholder Group was given the following charge:²

1. Jointly formulate recommendations for areas of expertise and selection of experts to inform the desired land use patterns for the area. The areas for study should include the suitability for urban development, desired land use patterns, and environmental constraints.
2. Jointly recommend the appropriate range of potential housing units with consideration given to intensity and community benefit, regardless of who holds title to the property.
3. Following the outcome of the BVCP process and 1 and 2 above, jointly recommend a timeline for the formulation of a set of guiding principles to inform next steps.

The joint resolution further indicated that the Stakeholder Group should be comprised of representatives of BCHA, BVSD, and TLAG. Heather Bergman of Peak Facilitation Group was selected as the facilitator for the first meeting and indicated that the Stakeholder Group could elect to work with Ms. Bergman or select a different facilitator for their future meetings. Ms. Bergman coordinated with BCHA, BVSD, TLAG, and City and County staff to identify a date and time for the

¹ Multiple requests were submitted by different applicants for the same land use designation change outcomes. For purposes of analysis, staff grouped the requests according to proposed outcomes. Two requests for a change to MXR (by BCHA and BVSD) were grouped as Request #35. Eleven requests, which included requests from individuals as well as the Twin Lakes Action Group (TLAG), for a change to Open Space were grouped as Request #36.

² The complete Council motion is included in this report as Attachment A.

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first meeting. BCHA, BVSD, and TLAG were each invited to send up to 3 people to participate in the first meeting, which occurred on April 13, 2016. The final meeting occurred on July 20, 2016. The Stakeholder Group's agreements are detailed below, followed by a summary of the process and several attachments for additional context and detail.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP AGREEMENTS

At the sixth meeting, the Stakeholder Group discussed each of the three tasks given to them in the Council motion and determined what, if any, agreement they had on each issue. The following outcomes and agreements emerged from this discussion. All agreements were achieved by consensus; exceptions are noted.

Task 1: Jointly formulate recommendations for areas of expertise and selection of experts to inform the desired land use patterns for the area. The areas for study should include the suitability for urban development, desired land use patterns, and environmental constraints.
As described above, this was a challenging discussion for the Stakeholder Group due to the differing views of the purpose of the task. For this reason, they discussed their views on this item in two ways: 1) regarding the land use designation change decision, and 2) regarding further development.

- ***Regarding land use designation changes:***
 - TLAG feels that the TLSG failed to fulfill this aspect of the Council motion, particularly as it relates to analyzing the feasibility of land use designation change request #36.
 - BCHA/BVSD feel that they gained additional information and have more information available than they have ever seen in similar processes.
 - TLAG will present additional information and study results to City and County staff before the August 8 Open House; staff commits to seriously reviewing these studies.
- ***Regarding land use patterns if development and annexation occur:***
 - Further hydrological assessments are desired, specifically regarding impacts to surrounding homes.
 - Further traffic studies are needed.
 - BCHA and BVSD will consult with the TLAG representatives prior to issuing additional RFPs to gain their input on scope of work and desired expertise for contractors. The Stakeholder Group agrees that this should occur in a way that is timely and expeditious.

Task 2: Jointly recommend the appropriate range of potential housing units with consideration given to intensity and community benefit, regardless of who holds title to the property.

The Stakeholder Group did not come to an agreement on the appropriate range of potential housing units for the Twin Lakes properties. They discussed three options and then shared their respective views on each option.

- ***If zero dwelling units per acre are constructed, then:***
 - Hydrological, wildlife, rural residential, and other community interests will be met.
 - Principles of open space will be met, and annexation will not be necessary.
 - Affordable housing will not be provided for the community on these properties.

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- **Perspectives:**
 - *TLAG has a strong preference for zero units. It is consistent with the request for land use designation that they submitted and the mission of the organization.*
 - *BCHA and BVSD cannot develop affordable housing units under this approach.*
- ***If six dwelling units per acre are constructed, then:***
 - It will be hard to meet affordable housing needs due to the cost of development, including building costs, hydrological and mitigation solutions, and wildlife habitat mitigation efforts.
 - Development may not be able to accommodate as many other community interests and amenities, such as open areas, community gardens, trail connections, etc.
 - Private-public partnerships could be explored to fund community benefits. TLAG is prepared to work to raise both upfront funding to develop community benefits, as well as funding to support ongoing maintenance costs. BCHA and BVSD indicated that this would help with the costs of development but may not be sufficient.
 - Attached, multi-family housing options will need to be constructed. This would require a deviation from the current BVCP regulations for low density development.
 - Fewer households would be served by affordable units.
 - More interests identified by some members of the surrounding community and TLAG could be met.
 - An ongoing TLSG advisory group would be needed to help guide design and ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods. TLAG representatives are willing to participate in such an advisory group; BCHA and BVSD are interested in working with such a group.
 - **Perspectives:**
 - *Six units per acre could be acceptable as an absolute maximum to TLAG if it abides by all of the stipulations outlined in the bullet points above. Six units per acre is a compromise number for TLAG, as it is higher than the zero units they prefer and deviates from their requested land use change. TLAG acknowledges that by-right development at this density can occur under the current Low Density Residential land use designation.*
 - *BCHA and BVSD indicated that six to twelve units per acre could be feasible for them to develop affordable housing, but further analysis would be required to be sure.*
- ***If 12 dwelling units per acre are constructed, then:***
 - Community benefits must be superb for those within and outside of the development.
 - An advisory group must influence the design and community benefits; this group should include potential residents and is even more important to have when developing at a higher density.
 - The development will be more financially feasible and is more likely to meet identified housing interests.
 - Diverse housing types will be explored and utilized, including townhomes, multiplexes, and single-family detached homes.
 - **Perspectives:**

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- *BCHA and BVSD have a strong preference for this number of units. As their land use change request sought to allow up to 18 units, they believe that this is already a compromise number.*
- *TLAG will not be able to support this development, as it is contrary to their mission statement.*

Task 3: Following the outcome of the BVCP process and 1 and 2 above, jointly recommend a timeline for the formulation of a set of guiding principles to inform next steps.

The Stakeholder Group identified and then agreed by consensus to the following list of guiding principles for the Twin Lakes properties:

Guiding Principles If Development Occurs

- Continue an advisory group to influence development, design elements, etc.
- Be thoughtful and clear about communication and ensure transparency going forward.
- Mitigate impacts on existing infrastructure and neighborhoods.
- Delineate wildlife habitat and corridor, open space, trails, and create a set-aside for no development.
- Ensure a diversity of housing types.
- Create a design that is consistent with the current surrounding neighborhoods.
- Ensure adequate parking to minimize negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Supply appropriate numbers and types of community amenities to the public.
- Supply appropriate numbers and types of affordable housing units.

TLSG PROCESS: 6 Meetings and an Open House

Meeting 1: Understanding the Council Motion and Developing Protocols

At the first meeting, the Twin Lakes Stakeholder Group heard from Mary Young and Bob Yates from the Boulder City Council and Deb Gardner from the Boulder County Commission regarding the goals and intent behind the Council motion (which was supported by the County Commissioners). Additionally, the group developed Protocols at this meeting to guide their future discussions. As part of this discussion, BVSD shared that there would only be one person representing the School District; BCHA shared that they would have up to 3 people participating at each meeting; and TLAG shared that they would have up to 3 people participating. Staff from both the City and County Planning Departments agreed to attend meetings and remained engaged to answer questions and provide context as needed regarding the BVCP and the associated revision process.^{3,4}

Meeting 2: Identifying Interests and Gaining Shared Knowledge

At the second meeting, each of the three entities in the Stakeholder Group outlined the interests that motivate their interest in the Twin Lakes properties. The identified interests were put together into a single list of stakeholder interests that was then printed on the agenda of the remaining meetings. The identified interests were:

- Meet housing needs.
- Provide affordable housing needs for workers of BVSD and other entities.
- Utilize land that is near existing infrastructure and jobs.

³ The TLSG Protocols are included in this report as Attachment B.

⁴ Summaries of all 6 TLSG meetings are included in this report as Attachment C.

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- Plan both sites of Twin Lakes together.
- Create program synergies between BVSD and BCHA.
- Create broad community support.
- Protect the environment and wildlife.
- Develop neighborhood amenities.
- Develop property to meet community interests and needs.
- Retain teachers and other employees throughout the County.
- Develop a vision and plan for Gunbarrel.
- Avoid setting regrettable legal precedents.
- Be able to offer permanent affordable housing as a recruitment tool for new teachers.
- Protect the rural-residential feel of the neighborhoods and surrounding lands.
- Collaborate on the creation of information and entire discussion.
- Base decisions in facts and science.
- Allow for a transparent process and open discussions.
- Allow all parties to remain up-to-date and informed on the progress of the process.
- Protect homes that already exist.
- Ensure ability to maintain infrastructure.
- Preserve agricultural lands.
- Move the process along at an appropriate pace.
- Learn from and improve on past projects.

Also at the second meeting, City and County staff answered questions that were provided by members of the Stakeholder Group over email in between meetings. Questions primarily addressed the BVCP process and methods; affordability and housing statistics and projections; annexation, zoning, and density; community benefits and amenities; site review; and compatible development and surrounding areas. A few questions were directed to and answered by the BCHA and BVSD representatives on the Stakeholder Group.

Meeting 3: Continuing to Gain Shared Knowledge and Understanding Hydrology at Twin Lakes

At the third meeting, City and County staff answered questions that had not been addressed at the previous meeting due to time constraints. Following this, the Stakeholder Group engaged in information sharing regarding their respective views and understandings of the hydrology on the Twin Lakes properties. City and County staff shared what they currently know about the hydrology on the properties and outlined how this information would be used in developing the staff recommendation regarding land use designation changes in the BVCP and the additional levels of detail required for future processes (i.e., annexation, initial zoning and site review). The TLAG representatives asked a professional hydrologist with whom they have been working to share his view of the hydrology of the properties. Following these presentations, the group discussed items that they would like to see added to the hydrology study already underway on the properties (more on this below).

Meetings 4 and 5: Exploring Options for the Twin Lakes Properties

At the following two meetings, the Stakeholder Group engaged in a map-based discussion about ways that land use could be configured on the Twin Lakes properties. Using base maps of the Twin Lakes properties, the group explored different land use options, ways the property can be configured, and where/how dwelling units, roads, and various amenities could be constructed on the properties if development occurs. The maps included open space, wildlife corridors, trails and other community benefits. They developed these “concept maps” based on the current land use

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designation of low density residential, as well as the proposed open space land use designation and the proposed mixed density residential land use designation. At the first map meeting, the group drew housing units, open space corridors, and other items directly on the maps. They determined at the end of the meeting that their housing units were not to scale and made it difficult to visualize the overall effect of the map. For the second map meeting, the group used to-scale mock-ups of housing units in concert with their drawing of roads and corridors to help them develop concept maps that were more understandable. A total of eight concept maps were developed at these two meetings. The group discussed how each concept map met or did not meet the identified interests that emerged from Meeting 2.

Open House: Getting Public Input on the Concept Maps

The Stakeholder Group agreed that it would be advantageous to host an open house and solicit input from the community on the concept maps. Members of the group worked together outside of meetings to prepare six summary concept maps that represented the variety of options they explored at the meeting. At the open house, participants were invited to comment on each of the six concept maps, indicating what they liked about each concept, what concerns they had about each map, and how each could be improved. Additionally, participants were invited to share general comments and write any questions they had. Members of the Stakeholder Group attended the open house and answered questions about the group's process and the concept maps. Approximately 60 people attended the open house. Following the open house, the Stakeholder Group agreed to post the maps on the TLSG website and invite additional comments via email. More than 30 comments were received via email. All comments submitted at the open house and via email were summarized in a single document and provided to the TLSG members in advance of the final meeting.⁵

Meeting 6: Finding Agreements

At the final meeting, the Stakeholder Group addressed each of the three tasks given to them by the Council motion and determined what agreements they could find on these items. The agreements are outlined below.

STUDIES: When and How to Learn More about Twin Lakes

The first task given to the Stakeholder Group by the Council motion was to “jointly formulate recommendations for areas of expertise and selection of experts to inform the desired land use patterns for the area. The areas for study should include the suitability for urban development, desired land use patterns, and environmental constraints.” This task proved challenging for the Stakeholder Group. The TLAG representatives interpreted this task as directing the group to discuss studies that should be done immediately to inform the land use designation change requests (both #35 and #36). For these members of the group, having a better understanding of the hydrology and wildlife values, in particular, would be critical to ensuring that City and County staff were able to make an informed recommendation to the four decision-making bodies regarding these land use changes—particularly regarding request #36 to change the designation to open space. Completion of such studies prior to the land use designation decision was extremely important for these members of the Stakeholder Group.

For the BCHA and BVSD representatives, this task referred to studies that would be done to inform the site development process that comes after the land use designation decision, assuming the land

⁵ The summary of comments received on the concept maps is included in this report at Attachment D.

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use designation either remains the same as it is or is changed to mixed density residential as they requested (#35). These members of the group believed that the studies should start now as they would take some time to complete, but they did not believe that these studies were intended to inform the land use designation decision. With this understanding, prior to the joint motion and the first facilitated meeting in April, BCHA issued RFPs for contractors to do both a hydrology study and a wildlife study. They stated an intent to gain input from the Stakeholder Group on the scopes of work for these two studies, as well as on the scope of work and desired expertise for future studies to occur on the property.

Members of the Stakeholder Group provided input on the scope of work for the hydrology and wildlife studies via email; these suggestions were discussed at Meeting 3. The confusion and disagreement regarding the intent of this task emerged again during the agreements discussion at Meeting 6.

PUBLIC COMMENT

At the first meeting, the Stakeholder Group discussed several options for receiving public input during the course of their deliberations. In order to maximize their discussion time, they agreed that public comment should be submitted to them via email through the facilitator. At regular intervals, the facilitator shared with the Stakeholder Group public comment emails that had been received. Eleven separate comments were received via email and shared with the group (exclusive of email comments received regarding the concept maps). Several early comments included questions from the public regarding the BVCP and the associated process. These questions were combined into a single document, and City and County staff provided written responses to these questions. The questions and answers were distributed to the Stakeholder Group, posted on the BVCP [website](#), and printed out as reference documents at the open house.⁶

⁶ The question/answer document is included in this report as Attachment E.